



The Goodrich Fire in 1969 was one of the worst fires in Town.

Fires of the Century

The Duxbury fire department appears to have had its official launch in 1834 when a Hunneman hand engine was acquired. Hunneman #1 was manned by Company #1 and housed at Cedar Street.

In 1906 the town selected its first Fire Chief Frederk B. Knapp. A year later the town voted to raise and appropriate \$800 to build and fit a house for engine number two near Hall's Corner.

Over the century there have been several major fires.

The Myles Standish Hotel on Standish Shore burned in 1908. Known as the Standish House when it was first built in 1871, it was Duxbury's premiere resort hotel. Visitors often came for the season to the famous hotel which boasted a pier, a links golf course, dining room and music hall. Following the devastating fire it closed four years later. Parts of it were remodeled and still stand along Marshall Street.

1913 - May 13 - The main building of the Powder Point School burned with a loss of \$45,000. There were no casualties.

In 1921 Ford's Store, known as the oldest department store in America succumbed to fire. Located on Tremont Street Millbrook, the store stretched well over 100 feet along Tremont Street and boasted a wide assortment of local and imported goods.

In 1933 Partridge Academy, at the site of the present town office building burned. Built in 1843, it served as Duxbury's high school until the Alden School (now the library) was built in 1927. The building was vacant at the time of the fire.

1941 Duxbury firefighters assisted in the great Brant Rock Fire which destroyed 497 buildings in Marshfield. Duxbury lost an engine in the conflagration.

1943 A fire at the town landfill off Mayflower Street required the first call to another town for mutual aid. Fires at the landfill were chronic nuisances until the transfer station was installed in 1977.

1944 A forty acre wood fire off West Street lasted for 19 days.

In 1945 a forest fire on Keene Street destroyed five acres.

1953 The three and a half story Duxbury Playhouse Dormitory located in a farmhouse on Bay Road was damaged on Thanksgiving eve at 2:22 a.m. Firefighters managed to save the connected playhouse which served the Duxbury Bay Players for many years.

In 1957 the great Plymouth forest fire burned 18,000 acres. Duxbury firefighters helped battle the blaze for four days. It started in Carver and paved a path of destruction all the way to Pine Hills.

1968 Fire Chief Carl O'Neill's old family farm homestead off Winter Street burned when a fire started in the hay barn. Many cows were killed and a prized bull had to be shot.

In September 1969 the Goodrich Lumber Yard and buildings burned in one of the biggest building fires in town. Remnants of the original buildings can be seen behind the present Goodrich store.

In 1985 there was a serious fire on the Powder Point Bridge which eventually led to the bridge being replaced in 1987. The longest wooden bridge on the eastern seaboard had survived several previous smaller fires.

In 1988 a serious house fire on Powder Point Avenue took the life of William Ellison in whose memory the Ellison Foundation was later established.

In 1994 an arson fire at Duxbury High School caused \$2 million in damage and a section of the school was closed for a year of repair work.

In 2000 a 50 acre brush fire spread out of control in West Duxbury from the Autumn Ave. Lake Shore Drive and Bravender Road areas along the power lines and crossing Route 53 until it was put down on DeLorenzo Drive.

Fire Chief Bill Harriman reports loss of life in five major fires over the past 50 years including the Ellison fire, Nickerson fire on Keene Street, Fernandes fire on Franklin Street, Proodian fire on Winslow Street, and Timpanny fire on Church Street.

(Chief Harriman and Captain Bill Wadsworth provided information for this article)